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ANECDOTES

METHODISM.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A SERMON,

ON THE

CONDUCT THAT BECOMES A CLERGYMAN.

By the Rev. R. POLWHELF.

Vicar of Manaccan, Cornwall.

Ἀμυνά δε ὑπὲρ Ἰερῶν, καὶ ὑπὲρ ὁσίων, καὶ μονῶν, καὶ
μετὰ πολλῶν.

Etiam hac dextra defensa fuisset!

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author of the following Anecdotes hath this day offered to verify them upon oath ; being ready to swear that all the facts which he has related from his own personal knowlege and observation, are true ; and that he believes the rest, as communicated by persons of unimpeachable veracity, to be likewise true.

The gentleman, however, with whom he conferred on the occasion, were decidedly of opinion, that, “ from his situation as a magistrate, such an attestation would be degrading to him ; and that his name in the title-page would be sufficient to substantiate every fact. in the minds of all those who merited his notice.”—not to

mention his vouchers for the Anecdotes; of weight enough to silence even prejudice itself.

If there are persons, who wish to be acquainted with his authorities, from other motives than impertinent curiosity, malevolence, or spleen, let them apply to him for information, at any justice-meeting at Mawnan-Smith within twelve months from the date of these papers, when they shall receive every reasonable satisfaction.

November 12th. 1799.

P. S. Since the printing of these pages, I have had an opportunity of
2 observing

observing one distinguishing trait in the character of the methodists.

It was at a justice-meeting at Mawnan-Smith ; where the connection between enthusiasm and lust, or the easy transition from (the methodistic) spiritual love to carnal desire, was indisputably proved. *Nicholas Trebilcock*, of the parish of Perran-arwothal, innkeeper, was summoned to appear before Sir Michael Nowell and myself, at Mawnan-Smith, to answer the complaint of *Joseph Pascoe* for an assault. *Pascoe*, (who is a Methodist,) was certainly beat by the innkeeper; though not, till after repeated

peated provocation. *Pascoe*, accompanied by a brother-Methodist, (a stranger) had entered the public-house, denouncing the wrath of heaven against it; and telling *Trebilcock* and his wife, that they would both be damned, if, in this season of scarcity, they refused to entertain the poor, "without money and without price."—After talking for some time in this canting strain, and using a blasphemous expression, which I do not chuse to repeat, the two Methodists went into an upper-room, and called for liquor.

The liquor was set before them:
and

and (as *Trebilcock* expressed himself) they continued “*preaching*” over their bowl, for a considerable time.

At length they descended into the kitchen; when the stranger departed, and *Pascoe* seated himself in a *settle*; —where he did not long remain, before he attacked, in a very rude and wanton manner, a girl who sat near him employed at her needle; inso-much that she ran out of the room, as soon as she could disengage herself from him, and flew up stairs. The Methodist pursued her, and (as the woman herself deposed) used her very indecently. On her escape from him,
he

he espied another girl, whom, with as little ceremony, he assaulted, and treated in a similar manner. The Methodist made no effort whatever, to contradict any of these particulars, but admitted the facts; and, on my asking him, how he could reconcile such levities and indecencies with his professions of superior sanctity—he answered me, only with the grimace of hypocrisy, or the grin of rusticity (no matter which)—and the man was troubled with no further questions.

ANECDOTES

OF

M E T H O D I S M.

SINCE the publication of my Letter to Dr. Hawker, a great variety of strictures have been made on that part of it which related to the Methodists. It has been observed, that the doctrines of Hawker and the Methodists are very different; and that, therefore, my notices of Methodism, in a Letter to Hawker, are out of place. But “he who reads as he runs,” may see, that I use methodism as a general term, including the more serious sort of religionists, whose superiority over the rest of mankind is chiefly indicated

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by

by the homeliness of their apparel, the demureness of their looks, the gravity of their gait, and the gloominess* of their conversation.

There is another feature of methodism, sufficiently obvious.—I mean its interference with the established minister; often attributable to its blind zeal in the propagation of its tenets, but, more frequently, to a “spirit which is not from above”—the spirit of

* This is one of the most striking criteria of Methodism; which affects the ignorance of all worldly matters, and every expression of which has a tincture of superstition. Even amongst its more informed votaries, whose minds are stored with human science, I have observed a disrelish for the classic authors both of ancient and modern times. If such persons happen to allude to a profane writer, it is in the language

of pride and arrogance. This is the popular notion of methodism*.

If we come to a closer inspection of it, we may remark that the Methodists, who sprung up about fifty years ago, were, from a difference in religious opinion, soon divided into two parties—the one under Whitfield;

language of Wesley, who quoting Pope pretends to melt in pity over the poor unenlightened poet: if they talk of a recent publication, which is unconnected with religion, they reprobate the unedifying work.

* But it behoves me to observe that the word is often applied in a still more general sense, to persons truly and sincerely religious, as contradistinguished from men of the world. In this sense I have never used it. Were I thus to adopt the word, I should exclaim, (in the same manner as I did with respect to enthusiasm), "would to God that I were the greatest Methodist alive!"

the other, under John and Charles Wesley. The Whitfieldian methodists were Calvinists; the Wesleian, Arminians. That the Methodists of the West of England are, in general, Arminians, I am willing to allow. But (as I have intimated already) without particularizing their characteristic doctrines, we, *prima facie*, term those, *Methodists*, who, whether Clergymen or Laymen, are *methodically* and ostentatiously religious; who *affect* to be "more righteous than others," and more than ordinarily zealous in the work of proselytism.

Whether this definition of methodism be acceptable to the fraternity or not, is to me a matter of perfect indifference. I am only afraid, that men of sense may deem it ridiculous,
to

to define at all—the religion of enthusiasts and hypocrites.

Before I proceed to my Anecdotes, I must notice one observation more, on my Letter to Dr. Hawker. In recurring so often as I have done to Bishop Lavington, for a sanction of my opinions, it is said, that “I should have acted wisely, had the Bishop’s been a work of any reputation. But, whilst his arguments were refuted, and his stories proved to be false, the Bishop himself was known to express his concern that he had ever published them. To obtrude upon the public, therefore, a book that had deservedly sunk into oblivion, was cruel to his Lordship’s memory. And to conjure up a phantom, which had so long been at rest, for the sake of disturbing again

the ignorant and the timid, was, indeed, extremely shocking." Such are the notions current among the Methodists. And one Carrington, who entered the lists, it seems, as second to Dr. Hawker, has also asserted, that Bishop Lavington, in his latter days, repented of his writings against methodism. Yet the Bishop's friends, of the cathedral of Exeter, know the assertion to be without foundation, as far as his conversation could afford assurance to the contrary. To the very last, he always spoke of the Methodists, as a fraternity compounded of hypocrites and enthusiasts. And, in regard to his book, I have authority for saying, that while its character stands unimpeached with the world at large, it is held in high esteem.

esteem by all those who were in the habits of intimacy with the Bishop, and had opportunities of being acquainted with his various sources of information.

I might considerably enlarge on this topic, were I disposed to anticipate my "Sketch of the Life of Bishop Lavington;" which I keep in reserve for the biographical part of the History of Devonshire, and the particulars of which must be judged authentic, when I add, that they were communicated to me by a relation of his Lordship.*

* One good end is already answered by my Letter to Dr. Hawker—I mean the opportunity given to Bishop Lavington's friends of contradicting reports injurious to his memory, and to the reputation of his work—"The Enthusiasm &c. &c."

In

In descending to my Anecdotes, I think it highly necessary to premise, that my sole intention in publishing them, is to prove the bad tendency of methodism in general; and that, by instancing the irregularities or vices of one methodist, I would, on no account, fix a stigma on every other; as if the disease of a single person must of course infect the whole society. The irregularities and vices, however, of many individuals, such as arise from situations almost peculiar to methodism, shew, that the whole society are in *danger* of a similar misconduct.

Whilst I affirm, then, that methodism itself is pregnant with almost every evil, I readily acknowlege that, amongst its professors, there are great numbers

numbers, whose unaffected piety would stand the test of the severest scrutiny.

It is curious, that, in Bishop Lavington's "Enthusiasm," there are parallels for almost all the facts which I have collected. These facts, then, together with the parallels, I shall arrange under general heads; with an occasional reference to Bishop Warburton's Tract on "the Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit."

IGNORANCE WITH ITCHING EARS.

IT is to "the itching ears" of an *ignorant* rabble, that methodism owes its principal success.---From a fondness for novelty, the Penryn-Methodists are said to have lent their meeting-house, a short time since, to the Quakers; when one of the Friends

took occasion to declaim against baptism; terming it, in ridicule, *splashing* and *dashing*. Several of the Methodists who attended, were mightily pleased with the preacher; affirming, that his doctrines were exactly the same, as their own *Rounder's*.

From a conviction, that the uninformed multitude are actuated, chiefly, by the love of novelty, both Whitfield and Wesley began their adventures with Field-Preaching.

Hence were their ears soothed with "Hosannas;" and "their eyes delighted" with "the scum of Cornwall, the rabble of Bilston, the wild beasts of Walsal, and the turnkeys of Newgate." *

* Enthus. of Methodists, &c. Vol. I. P. I. Pr. 12; 20; 28.

PREVARICATION.

A late Vicar of St. Gluvias, having heard that the governor of the work-house had taken upon him to preach at the methodist meeting, sent for him, and questioned him upon the subject. The man averred, that he had never preached there. The Vicar, assured of the fact, was surprised at the man's effrontery. "What! (said "Mr. ——) did you not preach, last night?" "No, Sir!"—"Were you not, at the meeting?" "Yes, Sir." "How, then, were you employed?" "Why—I exhorted." "Exhorted—did you?—Well—where's the difference between preaching and exhorting?" "Why—preaching, s preaching with a text—and exhorting, is preaching without a text."

Here, I need only notice Whitfield's Letter, in answer to Bishop Lavington's "Enthusiasm"; which is the very masterpiece of cant, prevarication, and hypocrisy. *

LYING.

* Though I would by no means apply these harsh terms to Dr. Hawker's Answer; yet I must observe, that Whitfield's Letter, in many points, resembles the doctor's; particularly where W. "nibbles" (as the Bishop expresses it) at the prefatory part, before "he attacks the remonstrance in form"—where he attempts to prove, that the Bishop had "contradicted himself"—where he reminds the Bishop of the question and declaration at the time of taking orders—"do you trust, that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost," &c.—where he quotes, as containing his own faith, in contradistinction with the Bishop the very articles which Dr. Hawker quotes, in contradistinction with mine—where, though he has dipped his pen in gall, he complains of his Lordship's calumny, and where he beseeches the
Bishop

LYING.

"You complain very justly, (says a respectable correspondent) of the neglect of the moral duties in the Methodists : I have witnessed the same, myself. *Lying* and *Prevarication* are common amongst them."

Perhaps, one of the most daring falsehoods that was ever uttered, was obtruded upon me, by a Methodist preacher at Helston; who, denying the truth of one of my Anecdotes, asserted that he had seen and talked with the gentleman from whom it confessedly came, and that that gentleman had disavowed to him, *viva voce*;

Bishop "to let Seward and Tillotson lie undisturbed; and not meddle with the dead, who cannot now answer for themselves." Pp. 9;

17; 44.

all

all knowlege of the matter, and all communication with me, on the subject. Yet the gentleman, (to whom I am indebted for the Anecdote, and who would authenticate it upon oath, were it necessary) never saw the Methodist-preacher on such business; nor ever conversed, or exchanged a syllable with the man, in his life.

HYPOCRISY.

On this head it will be needless to bring forward examples; as Hypocrisy is acknowleged to be a leading feature in the character of too many a methodistic teacher.

“ We shall end (says the Bishop of Gloucester) where every fanatic leader ends, with his Hypocrisy.*”

* See Bishop Warburton’s “Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit.”—

KNAVERY,

KNAVERY.

That these Methodists do not exceed the rest of the world in common honesty, is a position, which, I think, the following circumstance will illustrate. A Methodist, of Camborne, advanced a considerable sum on a mortgage to a man of Hlogan, formerly a respectable farmer, but through misfortune much reduced. It happened, some few months since, that this poor man was taken ill; when, wanting money for immediate relief, he sent his brother to the Methodist, to request some farther advance upon the mortgage; but to his great surprise was refused. The Methodist said, that he should want his money soon, and expected that the estate should be sold to pay off the mortgage. The situation

situation of the sick man was pressing; and his brother expostulated with the Methodist to no purpose; till at last this self-righteous puritan made a proposal, that he should part with a croft which he had, contiguous to his other property. The proposal was accepted; and the croft tendered by the occupant for eleven guineas, which was thought a very low price. The purchaser affected surprise, and offered three guineas; which, from the urgency of the case, the other was obliged to accept. But as he could not conveniently resign the immediate use of the croft, the proprietor desired that he might be permitted to have it, at an yearly rent; which was granted, at the very moderate price of—two pounds a year. The Methodist in question

question is, I believe, the leader of a class; and will *charitably* pray by any person who stands in need of prayer, and, like the Pharisee, compass sea and land to gain a proselyte.—I have, myself, been cheated by several Methodists—I will not say, when or where. Yet they professed to despise money—to “count it, as dung or dross.” Of their integrity I had never entertained the smallest doubt, before the transactions to which I allude.—

“As to gold and silver, I count it dung and dross” says Wesley. “I trample it under my feet*.”—“Tell the landlord (says an itinerant preacher at an inn) that if he take any thing of the Lord’s people, he will be damned†.”

* Enthus. Vol. 1. P. i. p. 24.

† Vol. 1. P. i. p. 69.

“ I received a Bank bill of ten pounds, as a present to myself. This I took as a hint from providence to go on”—says Whitfield*.—“ Enthusiasm must always be accompanied (says Bishop Warburton) with craft and knavery †.”

“ It is *often* so (says Wesley in his Letter to the Bishop) but not always. There *may* be honest Enthusiasts ‡.”

CONTEMPT OF THE REGULAR CLERGY.

At *Breage*, a Methodist offended at the Vicar's preaching, abruptly left the church in the midst of the sermon.—

A Methodist, having occasion to

* Vol. 1. P. ii. p. 16.

Warburton, on the Office, &c. &c. p. 213.

Wesley's Letter, &c. &c. p. 38.

stand as a sponsor for a child at *Sithney*, went out of church during the litany ; nor thought it worth his while to rejoin the congregation. This (however it may be glossed over from interested motives) I am warranted, I think, in attributing to a contempt of the church ; assured as I am, that the man was but following the steps of his own spiritual guide. I allude to the occasion of a funeral of one of " the Lord's people ;" when the Methodist-preacher, though he had walked in procession before the corpse from Helston to the parish-church of Wendron, condescended not to enter the church at the commencement of the funeral-service, but filed off with a few, I believe, of his train—thus unequivocally exhibiting his hostility to

our establishment.—At *Truro*, at the Bishop's last visitation, a Methodist, who had listened attentively to the excellent preacher, went away, exclaiming (as I was credibly informed) "that he was not worth hearing; nor worthy to unloose his shoe's latchet."

On a Sunday morning, about eleven o'clock, the Methodist-preacher of *Helston*, posted himself on a little eminence directly opposite to this Vicarage-house (of *Manaccan*) and supported by a farmer of *Manaccan* on his right-hand, and another of *St. Anthony*, on his left*, prepared to exhibit

* These persons, and their families, are the only Methodists, I believe, in my two parishes. In justice to their characters, I must add, that they are, by no means, Seceders from the church. On Sundays, they attend the morning service; and
never

exhibit himself; when the constable interfered, and dispersed the assembly. The occasion of this meeting, was a religious conversation between myself and the Manaccan farmer, a few days before; as one of his own family avowed. It was in defiance of me that they met; endeavouring to draw from me my little flock, during the hours of divine service at St. Anthony, about a mile and half distant; whither as soon as I was gone, the Methodist appeared on the hill. Having received, however, an intimation of the intended insult, I had given proper instructions to the constable. I know

never absent themselves from the sacrament. And one of them, in his conversation, discovers a simplicity which suggests the idea of the "Israelite in whom was no guile."

nothing

nothing of this instructor in righteousness, but that he is said to have been once an auctioneer of Redruth, and that he is now a mercer of Helston. Of his tub, or his horeseblock eloquence, indeed, I was assailed, but a few days since, with a foaming torrent—in a shop of one of his own people, where he suddenly attacked me in a most insolent and audacious manner; calling my Anecdotes of the Methodists—lies; insisting on my revocation of such palpable falsehoods, and threatening to bring the people around me in the market-place of Helston at some future day, and force me to authenticate my stories, or retract them, there, if I persisted in abusing the fraternity. One Anecdote in particular (he said) he had proved to be
abso-

absolutely false. To a gentleman, whose authority I had quoted in proof of it, he had himself applied for information; and that gentleman (he protested) had disclaim'd all knowledge of the affair*. With respect to Bishop Lavington's Report of the Methodists, he affirmed, that his Lordship had, in his latter days, repented of so notorious a fabrication, and that the work was judged disreputable to its Author. For the vices of the Methodists, what were they (he asked) compared with the enormities committed by the clergy and their congregations? "If a Methodist (says he)

* Under the head of LYING the reader hath already seen, that this person was here guilty of one of the most impudent lies that ever was uttered by the mouth of man.

be guilty of any flagrant offence, we expel him from the society---we turn him back upon you!!!”

Such was the effrontery of this man; for which it would be difficult to find a parallel.

About thirty years ago, a strange incident happened in the parish-church of St. Martin, which seems to place the contumacy of the Methodists in a pretty strong point of view. The clergyman, in proceeding to the communion-table, had complained of the chancel being crowded by some of his parishioners, and begged them to withdraw to the body of the church. To his request, I apprehend, due attention was paid; except by one man, a sturdy farmer who had been for some time attached to the meeting-house, though

though he was not a classed Methodist. This man, as the minister was going up to the altar, appeared to obstruct him on his way. The minister desired him to stand back; but the man refused; when one of the parties seized the other; and a most desperate struggle ensued: insomuch, that a lady of distinction, there, screamed and fainted at a spectacle so shocking; and the whole congregation ran immediately out of church, as if the roof had been falling on their heads.

How the affair terminated, I cannot learn; though, I suspect, not greatly to the credit of the farmer; as my informant was the farmer's friend. That very day (if I understood my informant rightly) both he and the farmer went

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to

to a Methodist meeting at Mullion : and they were, afterwards, admitted into connexion with the society.—

“ May I not be allowed to mention (says Bishop Lavington) as some objection to methodism, and stumbling-block in its way, their violation and contempt of order and authority ; their usurpation of the powers where-with their superiors are legally invested, and setting up for an independency ?— Holding forth, in unlicensed places, and without a license themselves, ‘ they cannot die in peace (they say) without bearing testimony against the unchristian principles and practices of those priests of Baal, the generality of our clergy.’ Such persons, by means of proper discipline, learning the cant of the party, a tolerably good assurance,

ance, and fluency of words, may easily set up for *circumforaneous* holders forth; and despising all human authority, scruple not to make their boast of inspiration.—I might here take notice of the irregular and unjustifiable behaviour of some of their followers at the holy communion. I speak from personal knowlege and can produce other evidence, that sometimes, a little before the delivering of the elements, three or four together will take it in their heads to go away; and that, sometimes, when the minister has delivered the bread into their hands, instead of eating it, they would slip it into their pockets *.”

AN

* See *Enthus.* Part II. PP. 125; 128.—I never before (says Whitfield) opened my mouth

AN INTRACTABLE REVENGEFUL SPIRIT.

Several Methodists lately obtruded themselves on *Sithney-Green*, at the time of the Parish-Feast; and by their psalmody attempted to drown the noise of the revellers; when they were assailed by stones and put to flight; on which they complained to the Magistrates, at Helston, against two or three persons concerned in the assault; of whom, one man being judged guilty, was directed to compound the matter, by paying two guineas. The magistrates, however,

so freely against the clergy of the church of England. "Woe be to such blind leaders of the blind! Wolves in sheep's cloathing!—How can you escape the damnation of Hell."—"Wesley's abuse of the clergy was not so gross; but more artful." Part I. PP. 16, 17.

could

could not forbear from censuring the conduct of the Methodists, in thus interrupting the feast, and abusing religion by a mistaken zeal. Yet charity must hesitate in attributing their demeanor to a mere error in judgment; whilst, as they left the hall, they discovered "what spirit they were of"—by execrating the justices, and wishing that "Elijah would come down with his fiery chariot, and drive them to Hell*."

"I have

* Of their spirit of revenge, a great number of the Methodists have lately given a most substantial proof, by withdrawing their subscriptions from Mr. Flindell's bible, under the idea that I was a sharer in the profits arising from it. But they may be assured, that I have no concern whatever, either in the conduct, or the emolument, of that publication. Indeed, for inspecting

“ I have often heard it affirmed (says Bishop Lavington) that the Methodist-preachers have been attended with a sturdy set of followers, as their guards; armed with clubs under their cloaths; menacing and terrifying those who should dare to speak lightly of their apostle*.”

POLITICAL RESTLESSNESS.

During the late riots in the neighbourhood of *Camborne*, the mask was thrown off by the Methodists;

inspecting the annotations, and occasionally furnishing him with notes, the Editor had intimated, that he would present me with ten copies, at the close of the work: but this task would have been neither convenient nor agreeable.

* Vol. I. P I. P. 14.

whose

whose views were obvious and direct—the destruction of subordination, and a share in the plunder of all property.

At this momentous crisis, Government ought surely to watch the Methodists, with the utmost degree of circumspection; since their political attitude has been, of late, entirely changed. Yet, even among the proto-Methodists, Bishop Lavington complains of “undutiful behaviour to the Civil Powers.”—“One of Mr. Wesley’s hearers was, it seems, pressed for a soldier; upon which Mr. Wesley breaks out into this hideous outcry: ‘Ye learned in the law! what becomes of Magna Charta, and of English liberty and property? Are not these mere sounds, while, on any pretence, there

there is such a thing as a press-gang suffered in the land ?'—Touch but the Methodist (says the Bishop) and, immediately, liberty and property, the church and state, the nation, all may perish, rather than a soldier be pressed.—Yet, often hath he bound himself, not *to speak a tittle of worldly things!*"*

VAIN GLORY.

Numerous examples of *vain glory* might be adduced, from the Methodists of the last and present ages. But under the two preceding heads, we

* Part II. PP. 133, 134.—If a Methodist be suspected of Jacobinism, he never attempts to remove the suspicion by declaring his regard for the King and constitution, but endeavours to point attention to a kingdom not of this world.

have

have not only seen a *vain glorious* spirit, but a high degree of UNCHARITABLENESS; little according with genuine christianity, whose distinguishing features are humility and charity.

“ Humility and charity (says a correspondent) by no means form the general character of these zealots. I have very seldom found any class of people so consummately conceited.”

The charity of the Methodists (if such it may be called) seems to be confined entirely to their own sect.

According to Wesley's own confession a Methodist-preacher told a woman, that she would be damned, if she did not know her sins were forgiven*?

* Wesley's Second Letter, &c. p. 5.

PROFANENESS.

Often by the familiar manner, in which they attempt the interpretation of scripture, are the Methodists led into profaneness.

Some time since, at the meeting-house at *St. Kevary*, a Methodist-preacher introduced into his sermon, a dialogue between God and the devil; each asserting his empire over men.

After a pretty smart conflict, the devil, it seems, gained the mastery; when God said, "take 'em all, devil—take 'em all, devil—take 'em all, devil!"

At *Penzance*, a fellow preaching on the text: "And they all with one consort began to make excuse," took up the context in a very singular manner. "The first said, I have bought

bought a piece of ground, I must needs go and see it." 'That might be'—cried the Methodist. "Another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." 'That might be'—cried the Methodist. "And another said, I have married a wife, and, therefore, I cannot come." 'That's a lie!'—cried the Methodist—'for he might have brought his wife with him.'

UNCLEANNESS.

I borrow the scriptural word, as including fornication, adultery, &c. &c. And it is really not to be wondered, that persons of all ages and descriptions, assembled in the middle of the night, should be tempted "to work all un-

F 2 cleanness."

cleanness." To the nocturnal meetings of the Methodists many, among their own people, strongly object; well knowing that opportunity, falling in with vicious inclination, must often terminate in acts of incontinence. Some of the Methodists apologize for their late hours by saying, that "when persons are, by the preacher, convinced of sin, they often fall down in agonies; and, being sorely afflicted for a considerable time, detain the preacher and his assistants in prayer, &c. &c. till they are released from the bonds of satan *". Others boldly aver (the Methodist preacher of Helston among the rest) that it behoves them to preach

* This I had from the mouth of one of the Methodists.—In season and out of season,

and

and pray, *in season and out of season*, like the holy apostles of old. This, certainly, was the cant of Wesley "who, from St. Paul's words (said Bishop Warburton) inferred more than they would bear, and misapplied them into the bargain*."

The love-feasts of the Methodists are generally protracted to a very late hour. At these feasts are distributed bread and water, accompanied with hymns, in imitation, I conceive, of the Lord's supper. As none but those in connexion are admitted to the supper, we are expected to compliment them, with supposing, that their repast is purely spiritual. At such an hour, however, I not only suspect, but am

* Warburton's Tract. p. 171.

assured,

assured, that there are “ young men and maids” disposed to exclaim with Comus :

“ Come, let us, too, our rights begin ;
Tis only day-light that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne’er report.
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veild Cotytto,” &c. &c. &c.

At a nocturnal meeting at *Mawgan*, a short time since, a girl upon her knees, praying, was seized by some one—*gently* I suppose—and a cry was soon heard “ that he was kissing her.” At *St. Agnes*, the society stay up the whole night, when girls, of twelve and fourteen years of age, run about the streets ; calling out, “ that they are possess’d.”—An exhorter (not a preacher) of the parish of *Sithney*

ney, being very solicitous to save the soul of his apprentice girl, made a point of taking her, in the evenings, to the meeting house; till, at length, the fruits of the spirit were manifested, by the girl's becoming *tota teres atque rotunda*. About six months since, the young woman was brought before the justices at Helston; where she made oath, that she was with child by the exhorter. *James Stephens*, alias *Duffan*, is a Methodist preacher, of a notoriously bad character. He has gone his rounds for several years, generally accompanied by a young woman in man's cloaths. He is discountenanced, it is true, by the more serious Methodists; but he still attracts numbers of poor deluded people to the horseblock or the scaffold.

The

The parish of *Constantine* furnishes us with three Methodist preachers, whose works, whatever their faith may be, can add no great lustre to the saints journal. The *first* was a young man, who, as soon as he had compleated his apprenticeship to a carpenter, went to London to *better his trade*. At his return he appeared, to most people, a most consummate coxcomb; but, in the opinion of his sect, he was a saint and an apostle. His career, however, was but short. He took to ill courses; and found it necessary to emigrate to America. The *second* was a worthless vagrant, whose conversion afforded matter of great triumph. His talents soon advanced him to the office of *exhorting*, at least, if not of *preaching*. But who can
play

play the hypocrite for ever? It was not long after that he was brought home, by a justice's order, with a second wife; his first and lawful one residing, at the same time, in Constantine-Church-town.

The *third*, during an unbounded share of admiration, gave a proof of his frailty by an intrigue with his father's servant; presented (in common with his brethren) with the *mollia tempora fandi*; as often as he accompanied the girl, to and from the meeting-house, where he preached.

It was there, whilst he was enforcing, I presume, the doctrine of attraction, that he drew to himself, the wife of a poor carpenter. The carpenter, jealous of his wife, complained

to the minister of her conduct, in running after the young Methodist, to the ruin of her family. But though the preacher was apt to confound the workings of the flesh with the spirit, the poor woman's attraction was conceived to be purely spiritual.

About the year 1791, a man who conducted the singing at the meeting-house of Aggevaller in the parish of *Camborne*, seduced and brought with child, the daughter of the clerk of that parish; though at the same time he had a wife and five or six children. The public was so much incensed against him, that he was obliged to quit the country. The father of the young woman, is a man of respectability. "Many instances of debauchery {says my *Camborne* correspondent

pondent) might be enumerated. Anti-connubial fornication happens very frequently among the Methodists: of this, several instances have lately occurred in the parish of Camborne—one, very recently.”

A female Methodist of *Probus* was, at length, so much ashamed of her brother and sister saints, that, breaking off all connexion with the society, she went to her minister, and disclosed to him many things which were done of the Methodists “in secret,” with a view of putting a stop to their indecent mysteries. Among other matters, she told him, that the preacher, at a late hour of the night after all but the higher classes had left the room, would order the candles to be put out, and the saints fall down, and kneel on
G 2 their

their naked knees; when he would go round, and thrust his hand under every knee, to feel if it were bare; the woman had acquiesced, it seems, in these *preliminary* ceremonials; but was shocked by the preacher's gradual advances towards "the perfecting of the saints in love."

The minister, to whom the woman gave this account, entertained not the slightest doubt of its truth. The anecdote was communicated to me by a gentleman who had repeatedly heard the minister relate it.

It is almost unnecessary to observe, that the *kneelers* of Cornwall, the *crawlers* of Wiltshire, and the *jumpers* of Wales, have all one family likeness: and to these nightly congregations, whether they kneel, or crawl, or jump,
are

are we indebted for "many mothers in Israel."—

"This sect (says the Bishop) are not very remarkable for the gift of chastity; often exhibiting pregnant proofs of venereal enthusiasm—the strange mixtures of debauchery and sanctity*."—"A Methodist-preacher, at Salisbury, being detected in adultery, both preached and published in justification of bigamy†."

"One had run out of the society in all haste, that *she might not expose herself*. The same offence was given in the evening. The first that was deeply touched, was L---W---; whose mother had not been a little displea-

* The Enthusiasm &c. Vol. i P. II. p. 159. Vol. ii. Pref. xviii.

† Vol. i P. II. p. 159, 160.

sed,

sed, a day or two before, when she was told that her daughter *had exposed herself* before all the congregation*.”

THE SPIRIT OF FAMILY DISCORD.

The distresses introduced into families by methodism stand so prominent in almost every town in the kingdom, that it would be almost obtrusive, to bring instances in proof of a matter which is already known to all.

I could mention several families, where affection and friendship seem to languish in the gloom of religion. On this head, however, I shall not enlarge, but present my readers with

* *Enthus.* Vol. ii. P. 332.

two extracts from letters addressed to me, for the purpose.

“ A porter, (who lives near a respectable gentleman of Falmouth) was upbraided by me (says the gentleman) for beating his wife; when the man, in justification of his conduct, said, that she had for some time past become a Methodist, and that she was frequently from home at a late hour of the night—the consequence of which was, that his children were neglected. There was no one to put them to bed at their accustomed early hour. In short, from the moment in which she became enlightened, the woman had abandoned all her domestic concerns.

I am convinced, however, that the little wholesome application of the
strap

strap had the desired effect as they have lately lived upon pretty good terms."

"I have been a witness (says a gentleman of Camborne) to the mischief which methodism creates in private families.

"An instance of this sort occurs in an adjoining parish, in the family of a very respectable friend of mine, whose daughter quitted his house, because he would not permit her to join in the nocturnal peregrinations of the saints. I believe, in her absence, she paid a visit to Dr. Hawker, and is now on her return. It is astonishing, how for this mad enthusiasm carries its unfortunate votaries. Every trace of filial affection and duty appeared to be obliterated from her mind."

FREAK-

FREAKISHNESS AND DISTRACTION.

The *Jumpers*, I should have observed, are not unknown to Cornwall. I have good authority for saying, that boys and girls have, in some places, been agitated with the same religious frenzy as works upon those of riper years; and that they have actually been seen, on the Four-Borough-Downs, jumping as high as they could, to catch "Jesus Christ by the toes."

At Helston, not many weeks ago, was a most horrid scene of confusion; whilst some it is said, were distorted in the strongest manner, and others falling suddenly down, as if seized with an epilepsy. Amidst this uproar several Methodists were praying over

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the poor wretches, and stroaking them down, and crying: "in, God! out, Devil!"

From this meeting, a servant in a very respectable family, at Helston, returning at a late hour, fell, soon after, into a fit, and had repeated fits during the night; crying out at intervals: "I am not God; but, God's! " would that you were, such as I am! " I am not God; but I am God's*!"

A very well disposed man, at Helston, who was much attached to the Methodists, determined, from that evening, never more to attend their meetings.—"The Lord revealed himself to a girl of about seven years old, in an amazing manner. And for

* "Εσσεαι Αθανάτος θεός, Αμύροτος, οὐκ ἐν θυμῷ."

some

some hours (says Wesley) she was so wrapt up in his spirit, that we know not where she was*.”

“ A husband and wife (says the Bishop) cannot be of the same class; nor a father and son, nor a brother and sister. They often pretend to receive the spirit: and, they that receive it, jump about the room, and ask others, if they dont see the spirit.”

“ At some meetings, women have been taken from the rooms where they met, and carried into bed-chambers, and thrown upon beds, where they have lain in fits, or swoons and the preacher has cried out: let them alone; the spirit is entering into them†:”

* *Enthus.* Vol. II. P. 190, 191.

† Vol. 2. Pref. xxix, 30.

INSANITY.

A poor man of Feock was so terrified by the methodist denouncers of damnation, whom he had been in the habit of attending, that he absolutely lost his senses, and never after recovered them. Unfortunately no precaution was taken against his mad freaks, till he had actually stoned a child * to death, in the house where he

* The child that suffered was not his own (as commonly represented) but of the person, in whose house he had lodged for many years. Of this child, however, the maniac was always remarkably fond. And the poor wretch seems to have thought, that, by the dreadful act which he committed, he should send the infant to Heaven.—Of this melancholy incident, the following is a more circumstantial account; since communicated to me, by a gentleman of high respect-

he lodged. The man was committed by the magistrates at *Truro*, and tried for

respectability. "I have just had a conference with *Humphrey Bate* of *Feock*, on the subject of the murder of his little daughter, between two and three years old, by *John Retullack*. *Bate* says, that *Retullack* is a tinner, and lived in his house for several years—his character very regular and sober—that he had, now and then, gone to the methodist meeting-houses, but did not appear to be much attached to them, till *Dr. De Motte* came into the neighbourhood—that, for about three weeks before his frenzy, he attended them regularly and was admitted to their love-feasts.

During that time, his temper appeared to be much altered: he was gloomy and dejected; and it was with difficulty that his friends could prevail on him to speak to them.

On the night of the child's death, he got up from his bed, quite naked, and called on the father of the child and some other people in the house to arise also, and pray with him. With
this

for murder at the Launceston assizes : but the judge commended him as insane to the care of the magistrates.

“ An

they complied. After some time, on their persuading him to return to his bed, he became violent ; wounded Bate in the head with a stone, and assaulted the rest. On finding that they could not well manage him, Bate went to a neighbour's for assistance ; and so did his wife. In their absence, he fell upon the children, and wounded two boys, who escaped with their lives by jumping out of window. And, on the return of the parents, they found him with the little girl in his hands, whose skull he had with a stone broken in several places.

I should have observed, that, before this happened, he had frequently thrown off his tinner's dress, and said he would go up the country a preaching—And sometimes, he would look on his hands, and observe, they were rather too coarse for a preacher's

Bate is clearly of opinion, that all this arose from

“ An angel appeared to Joseph Peters, and told him, he should bring his

from his attending the methodists; and says, that several others were affected in pretty much the same manner, though they did not commit the same excesses—particularly by a very DEEP sermon of the doctor's, by which many were thrown into fits and convulsions; and tears were observed to flow plentifully over *Retullack's* face.

The methodists endeavour to account for his frenzy, by saying, that it was the effect of a wounded conscience, in consequence of some disputes he had had with his mother about their domestic concerns. I questioned *Bate* about this. But he says, he cannot be of that opinion; as he used to blame his brother, in the business, and to say, that he would take care, his mother should never want. *Bate* told me, too, that, on *Retullack's* being asked, why he had hurt the child, of which he had always appeared to be so fond—he smiled, and answered: ‘ what could you have done better for her? *I wanted to wash*

my

his mother into the society of Methodists; and that, if she refused, he should kill her.

On her refusal, he actually attempted to cut her throat. Upon a second vision, he again attempted to kill his mother; and set the house on fire, and was sent away to a mad-house.”—

“ This, with other facts (says the
my hands in innocent blood ! I have now done it—
I have sent the child to heaven ; and I shall soon follow her, myself”

The father, also, tells me, that *Retullack* has, long since, recovered his senses, is perfectly steady and composed ; but *takes care, never to go near the methodists.*

You will observe, that *Bate* appears to be a very grave, serious man ; by no means of a warm temper, or at all violent against those whom he thinks to have been the remote authors of the death of his child.”

Bishop)

Bishop) may, in a great measure, serve, for an answer to those who enquire, what is the religion of methodism?"

THESE facts, whether furnished by the last, or the present generation, all equally relate to one body of people—the Methodists. Taken all together, they seem to indicate, that METHODISM has not been analysed unjustly; and that, resolved into

IGNORANCE WITH ITCHING EARS,
PREVARICATION,
LYING,
HYPOCRISY,
KNAVERY,
CONTEMPT OF THE REGULAR CLERGY,
AN INTRACTABLE AND REVENGEFUL SPIRIT
POLITICAL RESTLESSNESS,
VAIN GLORY,
UNCHARITABLENESS,
PROFANENESS,
UNCLEANNESSE,
THE SPIRIT OF FAMILY DISCORD,
FREAKISHNESS AND DISTRACTION,
AND
INSANITY,

it has a tendency to betray its votaries into every irregularity, and to plunge them into every vice.

The incidents which I have enumerated, are, for the most part, such as came to my knowledge by mere chance; and are all, except one, of a recent date.

And the neighbourhoods, where they happened, form but an inconsiderable part of Cornwall. With very little pains, I doubt not, but I might make great additions to these casual notices.

According to their own report, the number of Methodists, dispersed through the kingdom, are no less than half a million of his Majesty's subjects. If, then, from the sample of the Methodists before us, we may judge of their collective body (and
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the parallels from Bishop Lavington belonging to different times and places, will determine such judgment to be fair) we cannot but experience shame and terror, at a spectacle so degrading to our nature, and so menacing in its consequences *.

“ The

* See Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. lxix. Pp. 579, 741.

“ The sect of the METHODISTS CALLED JUMPERS (as W. M. B. observes in the Gentleman's Magazine) are distributed through the whole of North-Wales.—All that is said of their extravagant behaviour is true in its fullest extent.—What renders this sect more dangerous is, that the preachers are, in general, INSTRUMENTS OF JACOBINISM, sent into this country to disseminate their doctrines: And, I assure you, that Paine's Works, and others books of the like tendency, have been translated into Welsh, and secretly distributed by the leaders

“The conclusion of the whole matter” is this—that, if the promulgation of the above particulars,* produce

of this sect. These, Mr. Urban, are facts which may be depended upon, and which are well known to many in this country, as well as myself. This letter is dated Denbigh; where (the writer says from his own personal knowlege) full 4,000 people were assembled in April last, at one of their periodical meetings.

* Together with the exertions of my brethren, I mean, both from the pulpit and the press.—Whilst the methodists kept decent measures, with us, we left them to themselves.—But their open prostitution of religion has very justly drawn from the members of the establishment, as open a reprobation of their conduct —has drawn from our Diocesan himself such a censure of their doctrines, as is no less appropriate than severe. In the same manner, a predecessor of his Lordship, treated the methodists of a former age. Sorry, indeed, should I have

produce not the desired effect in checking the progress of methodism ; *

I have been, to see my brethren supine in this momentous affair—to see them afraid, or ashamed, to come forward in defence of the gospel, so flagitiously abused by those arrogant fanatics ! Sorry should I have been to observe them so lost in religious apathy, as to slight our Saviour's menace : “ whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him, also, shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his father with the holy angels.” Mark viii. 38. Yet, even if such had been the case, I would boldly have entered the field, “and stood alone” (as a motto in my title-page expresses it) against a host of adversaries ; who force the weak to tremble, and the bold to blaspheme.

* Such facts are likely to have more weight than all the reasoning in the world. That the methodists are ashamed of the things laid to their charge, is evident from their efforts to prove them false. And their shame, I trust in God, will operate in preventing the repetition of such enormities.

many

many are the loyal and the religious, who will pray for the interposition * of the legislature; to meet a growing evil, that may endanger both the church and state.

* Such our Diocesan seemed to intimate in his late excellent charge to the clergy.

A SERMON

A
SERMON
ON THE
CONDUCT OF A CLERGYMAN.

IN SIMPLICITY AND GODLY SINCERITY, NOT
WITH FLESHLY WISDOM—2. Cor .c. i. v. 12.

WHILE the maxims of the world are drawn from sources little connected with our native ingenuousness, it is the peculiar glory of the gospel to have founded every principle of conduct in the heart, and to appeal, on all occasions, to that conscience which the Author of our being has placed within us, as the guide to truth and the safeguard of integrity. That candor and brotherly kindness which distinguish
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the genuine christian may be well contrasted with the cunning and selfishness of the sordid worldling. And no one, who views these characters in the abstract, will hesitate in deeming the former amiable, and the latter unworthy his regard. Yet, in descending to particular examples, we often contradict the decision of our hearts, by maintaining too favourable an opinion of the man of the world, whose understanding we appreciate in proportion to the success of his projects ; and, thus inconsistent with ourselves, adjudge the prize to fleshly wisdom, in preference to simplicity and godly sincerity. Hence some who are religiously disposed are ashamed of being thought so ; lest the reputation of sanctity should

should detract from the credit of their good sense.

In all situations of life, we may observe too many regulating their practice, after the rudiments of the world, and not of Christ. The great, who are more peculiarly the slaves of fashion and custom, are taught to smother all sentiments which are suggested by the generosity of nature; and, adopting manners that are artificial, and maxims that are hypocritical, to substitute a cold civility, (or an air of indifference) for urbanity, and for singleness of heart, duplicity, and fraud. From the general discountenance of a contrary mode of behaviour among the higher orders, a specious apology may possibly be formed for such manners and such morality. But little

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can be offered in vindication of those in middle stations, who laugh at simplicity and godly sincerity as betraying an imbecillity of mind, and an ignorance of the ways of men. Governing their practice by the lessons which they derive from their superiors, they affect a pride and a reserve which can never accord with the meek submitted spirit of the gospel, and a religious apathy directly hostile to the devotional feelings.

In this description of persons, there are a great number who profess to believe the truths of Revelation, and who would by no means avowedly divest themselves of the restraints which christianity imposes. Yet, from the force of habit and various examples, they suffer themselves "to be con-
formed

formed to this world." Though no actually transgressing the moral law, they breathe no christian spirit. Though sufficiently attentive to decency and decorum, "they have never been transformed by the renewing of their minds." Though well acquainted with the criteria by which the mere moralist determines the merit of an action, they utterly overlook those rules, with which the gospel has furnished us, for the government of our lives. And they are surprized at the intimation, that even those very actions, which have procured them popularity, and conciliated esteem, if tried by the law of Christ, will often be judged unprofitable and vain. *

Whether

* Yet the law of nature (as I have intimated in my letter to Dr. H.) is prior to the law of Reve-

Whether any part of the clerical order be actuated by this principle of worldly

lation. Bishop Hurd, in his admirable sermon on Romans ii. 14, 15. informs us, after St. Paul, that there is a law of NATURE written in the hearts of men; and that this position is proved “by the virtues of the heathen world.” “Bad as that world was (says he) it cannot be denied to have furnished many instances of extraordinary virtue. We find there, justice, temperance, fortitude, and all those virtues which their own moralists called offices, and which the sacred page has dignified with the name of graces, exhibited in their fairest forms, and emulating, as it were, even christian perfection.”—“And how, but by NATURE, did the heathen, in any degree, the things of the law?”—“The Pagan historians and moralists are full of such lessons as we now profit by.—Numberless persons are upon record, who confess in their own cases, and attest this uniform power of conscience. They applaud themselves

worldly accomodation, or not, it may not be improper to enquire.

I shall,

selves for what we should call a well-spent life ; and they condemn themselves for what we call a bad one."

The Bishop, in his next discourse, on Gal. iii. 19. "Wherefore then serveth the law?" proceeds to tell us, that "when the apostle Paul had proved, in his Epistle to the Romans, that if the "uncircumcision kept the righteousness of the law, his uncircumcision would be accounted for circumcision,"—that is, if the Gentile observed the moral law, which was his proper rule of life, he would be accepted of God as well as the Jew, who observed the Mosaic law; this generous reasoning gave offence, and he was presently asked, "what advantage then hath the Jew?" In like manner, when the same apostle had been contending, in his epistle to the Galatians, that the inheritance was not of the law, but of promise; that is, that all men, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, were entitled to the blessings of the christian

I shall, therefore, take occasion to shew, where fleshly wisdom differs from

christian covenant, in virtue of God's promise to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed— and not the Jews exclusively in virtue of the Mosaic law, given to them only; the same spirit discovers itself as before, and he is again interrogated by his capacious disciples, “ wherefore then serveth the law?”—if the Gentiles may be justified through faith in Christ, and so inherit the promise made to Abraham as well as the Jews, to what purpose was the Jewish law then given?

And to those questions, how unreasonable soever, the learned apostle has himself condescended to give an answer. How the same perverseness, which gave birth to these Jewish prejudices, seems to have operated in some christians; who, on being told, and even by St. Paul himself, of a law of nature, by which the heathen were required to govern their lives, and by the observance of which, without their
knowledge

from the simplicity and godly sincerity which the apostle recommends; as exemplified—

1. In

knowledge of any revealed law, they would be finally accepted—have been forward in their turn to ask, “wherefore then serveth the law?”—“That a natural moral law is required to support the authority of Revelation I conclude, not merely, because this supposition is actually made in sacred scripture, because the sacred writers argue expressly from it, and every where refer to it, but principally and chiefly, because, without admitting this prior law of nature, we cannot judge of any pretended Revelation, whether it be divine or no. For if there be no such moral law previously given, which our hearts and consciences approve, and to which our common nature assents, we can never see the fitness of any means, as conducive to a moral end; we can entertain no just and clear notions of moral action, properly so called; and, consequently, we can have no
ideas

1. In our conversation with the world at large.

2. In

ideas of what are called the moral attributes of God. Now in this state of ignorance and uncertainty, how shall any man go about to prove to us the divinity of any Revelation, or through what medium can its truth or authenticity be established? We have no rule, no principles, by which to judge of the law pretending to come from God: we cannot tell, whether it be worthy of him, or not: we do not so much as know what *worth* or *goodness* is, either in ourselves, or in the Deity. Thus all *internal arguments* for the excellence of any religion are at once cut off. And yet, till from such considerations, we find that a religion *may* come from God, we cannot reasonably conclude, on any evidence, that it *does* come from him. The religion of Mahomet may, for any thing we can tell, if there be no moral law for us to judge by, be as worthy of God, as that of Jesus. Nor will any *external arguments*, even the most unquestioned miracles,

2. In our conduct, within our parishes,

3. In

cles, of themselves, be sufficient to confirm its pretensions. For how shall we know, that these miracles are from God, unless we understand what his attributes are, and whether the occasion, for which they are wrought, be such as is consistent with them?—So that those zealous persons, who think they do honour to the revealed will of God, by denying him to have given a prior natural law, do indeed defeat their own purpose, and put it out of their power to judge of any Revelation whatsoever.”

This is all that I have been contending for, in those observations which have excited so much indignation in the Methodists.

The Methodists indeed, presume not to deny, in positive terms, the truth of St. Paul's intimation, that every virtuous heathen will be saved. Why, then, do they despise or lament over the best moral men among the heathen?

3. In our family-intercourse,
4. And in our deportment in the house of God.

Were

In the "house" of our heavenly father, there
"are many mansions."

Though Wesley may be admitted to a higher
"story;" yet "poor Antonius," (as Wesley calls
him) will not, we hope, be excluded from Heaven.

To those, who still think, that by allowing
such honours to morality, we depreciate Revelation, let Bishop Hurd speak, once more:
"what if all men" (says he) be endowed with
those facilities, which, properly employed,
may instruct us in the knowledge of God and
ourselves, and of the duties we respectively owe
to him and to each other?—Is it nothing that this
knowledge is rendered more easy and familiar to
us by the lights of the Gospel? Is it nothing
that those laws, which men of thought and reflection
may deduce for themselves from principles of natural reason, are openly declared to
all—

Were I conscious, that I was addressing myself to those, whose morals
were

all—that they are confirmed, illustrated and enforced by express Revelation? Is it of no moment that the plainest and busiest men are as fully instructed in their duty, as men of science and leisure, the simplest as well as the wisest, the mechanic and the sage, the rustic and the philosopher? Is it of no use that men are kept steady in their knowledge and observance of the law of nature, by this pole-star of Revelation?—that they are secured from error and mistake; from the effects of their own haste or negligence, or infirmity, from the false lights of fanaticism or superstition, and from the perverseness of their own reasonings?—Look into the history of mankind, and see what horrid idolatries have overspread the world, in spite of what nature teaches concerning God; and what portentous immoralities have prevailed in the wisest nations, in defiance, nay, what is worse, under the countenance and sanction of

were reprehensible, or whose behaviour, indeed, was, at all, improper, I should greatly fault; whilst I presumed to act the part of a censor or look to the imperfections of others, when it would better become me to examine and correct my own. But, sensible as I am, that the clergy of this Diocese are truly exemplary in their moral and religious conduct, I

what was deemed natural reason. Add to all this, that the moral duties we thus easily and certainly know, and without any danger of mistake or corruption, by means of the evangelical law, are enjoined by the highest authority; are set off by the brightest examples; are recommended to us by new arguments and considerations; are pressed upon us by the most engaging motives, higher and more important than nature could suggest to us; and, lastly, are sublimed and perfected by the most consummate reason."

may

may proceed with confidence to point out those deviations from duty which it is necessary sometimes to mark; that, in proportion as we observe them in others, we may determine to avoid them ourselves. For though, hitherto superior to temptation, we still walk in the path of rectitude, it behoves us to notice the wanderings of our brethren; lest trusting to our own strength, we repose in a fancied security, nor call for assistance on that all gracious father, who can alone “strengthen the feeble knees, and keep our feet from falling.” 1. *In regard to our conversation with the world;* the first question is, whether we render it in all respects subservient to our duty, as the ministers of a holy religion? That business and pleasure occupy,

occupy a large portion of our time, is too general a subject of regret. The interested connexions which we form with a view of advancing ourselves in the world, if not in their principles exceptionable are, often, I fear, supported by measures incompatible “with righteousness and true holiness.” Nor are “the lust of the eye, and the pride of life” to be easily reconciled with the pure affections and the humbleness of mind, by which “all men are to know that we are Christ’s disciples.” Yet it is suspected, that the first step, with too many of our order, is too connect themselves, if possible, with those who have the disposal of ecclesiastical emoluments, to court the favour of a great man, though his character be contemptible, and to submit

submit to his various caprices with the meanest servility. Not that I would discommend such an attention to our interests, as consists with a dignified deportment. And there are certain situations, where a clergyman may with propriety sacrifice a little to the humour of his superiors, with a view to his temporal advancement. But there is one station in particular, which, though a clergyman may hold it, with the sanction of the world, is yet, in the opinion of the most dispassionate judges, inconsistent both with the design and spirit of the clerical profession. It is unquestionably filled by many deserving characters among our brethren, whose talents and virtues might seem to adorn it with no feeble lustre. Still, however, there is something

thing so incongruous between our spiritual cares and the functions to which I allude, that we can never regard them as united in one person, with any degree of satisfaction. Separated from the rest of mankind, and placed in the most conspicuous point of view, as the preachers of perfection and the patterns of unspotted purity, does it become us to descend from this glorious elevation, upon that slippery ground, where, alluring as it may be to the worldly-minded, every step requires a tremulous circumspection, and where, to deviate in the slightest degree, must degrade us beyond all possible recovery—where those, with whom we ostensibly concur, though we secretly disapprove their measures, are often tempted to pursue the most circuit-

circuitous paths, and to wind through all the obliquities of intrigue? Does it accord with godly simplicity thus to commit ourselves; as, joining hands with a political party, we pledge our honor in support of projects which are seldom so pure in their source as to bear examination, but which, in their progress, are often tinged with venality? Admitting (what is sometimes the case) that we really subject ourselves to no bad influence, that we engage in on improper pursuits; is it not equally true, that, thus circumstanced, we are regarded, by all around us, with an eye of watchfulness, and must frequently incur suspicion? And such is the delicacy of our character, that even to be suspected is disgraceful. In our commerce with the world,

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therefore,

therefore, let us, in this instance, and in every other, avoid, as much as possible, all appearance of evil. Never, in short, let the prospect of preferment prevail on us to enter into any associations but such as perfectly correspond with our dignity.

But there are associations of pleasure as well as interest, against which the younger part of my brethren cannot be too strenuously warned. Dissipation has numerous and powerful attractions—sufficient, doubtless, to dazzle those who, though peculiarly devoted to the Gospel, must, from their age and inexperience, be yet alive to every pleasureable impression. It might be rigid, perhaps, to object to a moderate participation of all those harmless amusements which a polished society

society hath placed within our reach. But there are some species of amusement which, though innocent in the opinion of the world, are, from their tendency at least, wholly exceptionable: and, with regard to the rest, to define moderation is no easy task. Besides, there is a distinction between private and public diversions. To join frequently in the latter is unworthy of us: and (what is more in point) it must have a baneful influence on our piety, if it affect not our general morals. With him, who often repairs to the house of festivity and dancing, those devotional sensibilities which he experiences in the house of prayer will soon evaporate. It is thus, that "the love of many waxeth cold:" and hence, we are too deservedly classed

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among

among those, whom the apostle hath described, as “ lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”

2. But let us pass to the next topic which I proposed for our consideration—*our conduct with respect to our parishioners.*

In our ordinary intercourse with those who are entrusted to our care, it sometimes happens that we are too prompt in consulting our own profit and pleasure. As to our worldly concerns, it would be difficult to determine, in positive terms, where, or in what measure, our actions are derived from fleshly wisdom. In many things we must unquestionably be governed by circumstances: and of circumstances there exists an endless variety. To descend, therefore, to particulars,

particulars, and give absolute directions for the regulation of the conduct, would be futile and absurd. But in all circumstances it behoves us to enquire, whether our conduct be founded on sentiments of duty, or on merely interested motives? This is a question to be resolved by ourselves alone. Our parishioners cannot resolve it for us. To our own consciences must we appeal for the final decision. That action which the world condemns may be acceptable in the sight of god: and the very demeanor, which seems entitled to human applause, may render us just objects of the divine displeasure. The application of this remark is obvious. Our temporal concerns are intimately interwoven with those of our parishioners.

oners. A tenth part of all the produce of land hath been, from high antiquity, set apart for the ministers of religion: to this tenth part are we entitled both by the laws of God and man. The right of the clergy to tythes is much more firmly established than even the national constitution itself. Yet in regard to tythes, our situation is extremely delicate and critical. To insist on our just right, may expose us to the censure of exaction; and, what is of infinitely greater consequence, create the bitterest animosities between ourselves and our parishes. But to remit of that right, may be injurious to our families, and prejudicial to the interests of the church.

These are two different lines of
conduct,

conduct, either of which may be attended with great inconvenience and discomfort. Yet a clergyman may pursue either line, consistently with his duty. He may enforce, or he may remit of, his right, with simplicity and godly sincerity. The former, I confess, seems to savour more of "fleshly wisdom." And, in many cases, I suspect, it originates in no other motive. There is one consideration, also, which is of great weight. The best men are extremely apt to be biased on the side of interest. In examining our hearts, therefore, on this occasion, we should have all the apostolic diffidence about us—"We *trust* we have a good conscience (says St. Paul) in all things *willing* to live honestly."

Whether

Whether the spiritual welfare of our flock be our first concern or only a secondary care ? is a question of the highest importance. If it be really our first concern, another question will immediately occur, whether a severe attention to the claims of interest may further or retard it ? That such an attention cannot assist us in the work of the ministry is sufficiently clear.

But on this topic I would by no means enlarge—aware, that there are numerous instances, in which a clergyman hath sacrificed half the income which he might reasonably expect, to the fancied good of his parishioners, without being able to satisfy their cupidity. But it is not in lucrative pursuits alone, that we may incur the charge of worldly-mindedness :

ness: we betray a want of christian zeal—or coldness bordering upon insincerity, whilst we consult our own ease and pleasure to the apparent neglect of those whom we are appointed to superintend. There is often an indolence about us, that not only prevents us from seeking out objects that require temporal assistance, but precludes every opportunity of giving them spiritual advice and admonition. That we are charitably disposed, and administer to the wants of others, on every pressing application, I am ready to allow: but are we not, (too many of us) so closely occupied by our own selfish gratifications, as scarcely to admit more than a momentary reflection on the fate of our suffering fellow-creatures? Are we sufficiently touched

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by

by their complaints, and do we endeavour to bring forward the cases of the unfortunate, to the notice of our superiors? It is chiefly, however, to a religious lukewarmness that I referred, to our seeming inattention to the spiritual welfare of our parishes. He, who really possesses simplicity and godly sincerity, will often advert to religious subjects, in his ordinary conversation. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." In our intercourse with our flock, there will arise various occasions, which we may, doubtless, seize for their instruction and edification. In the world at large, it is far otherwise. In mixed society we must, in some sort, accommodate ourselves to the reigning prejudice. And the caprices of fashion will

will always prevail against the decisions of reason. In the mean time, within the circle of our parishes, there are many, who, applying to us for advice in worldly matters, would be fit objects, also, for spiritual instruction. There are many, over whom we have acquired an influence, by obliging and assisting them in their secular concerns. Yet, how seldom do we avail ourselves of this ascendancy, to their religious advantage! might it not almost be supposed, that our religion was confined to the pulpit? God forbid. On the strictest scrutiny I hope, this apparent irreligiousness can only be referred to habits of ease and indolence.

3. This seemingly irreligious care-

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lessness

lessness is peculiarly observable within the circle of our own families. It might, at first sight, be imagined that, in the privacy of domestic retirement, it would be easy to trace our conduct to its principles. He, who is sincerely pious, can never, it might be presumed, appear otherwise to his own household. In his family, no person would put on the mask of dissimulation, in order to conceal his piety from the eyes of his domestics. Yet he, who is by no means deficient in the performance of his religious duties, in public, hath justly been accused, in private, of a regular irreligiousness. Not that he offends against religion either in word or in deed: yet, in this point, his retired hours are one series of omissions.

With

With his nearest connections, he rarely converses on "the one thing needful:" seldom doth he "open to them the scriptures:" never, perhaps, doth he anticipate that heavenly communion, in which separated friends shall meet again, to share the rewards of eternity. On the Sabbath, he may possibly instruct his children in a few elementary principles: but, as soon as the formal moments are over, he dismisses all spiritual cares. His servants he resigns to their own amusements, on that day; or, if he acquiesce not in the too prevailing custom, he seldom recommends religious subjects to their attention. Perhaps, he may conclude the day with prayer: but does he thus consecrate the employment of any other day? To unite with their families,

families, both in the morning and evening prayers, our forefathers "were not ashamed." But even in the houses of the clergy, the evening prayers are too commonly neglected. These omissions, I have, attributed to an indolence, which sometimes steals upon those who have, nevertheless, a just sense of their duty. But let us not deceive ourselves: let us take care, that that indolence become not a lethargick stupor, affecting the vital principles.

4. If, in our conversation with mankind at large, with our parishes, with our families, we seem rather to have demeaned ourselves as the servants of the world, than as a chosen priesthood, I suspect, that we scarcely enter the church, with a disposition to reduce all our opinions and passions
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“ under subjection to the law of Christ.” In offering up our prayers, at the throne of grace, have we not sometimes manifested a greater desire to exhibit ourselves than to glorify the Almighty? Have we never substituted the affectation of fine reading, for the simplicity of a fervent devotion? Have we not altered sometimes the forms of prayer according to our own notions of propriety, instead of adhering to the letter prescribed with that diffidence which best becomes us? Have we never betrayed a thoughtlessness and unconcern in hastily and irreverently dispatching the service, when we ought to have evinced our godly sincerity, by a heartfelt solemnity in performing it? For the pulpit, we are much more apt
to

to frame our discourses, according to the wisdom of the world, than the "truth which is in Jesus." In general, we prefer ethics to christianity—the portico to the mount. In particular, instead of referring to times and circumstances, in the manner of our Saviour, and rendering them subsidiary to the gospel, we advert to times and circumstances, in the manner of that fashionable character, the political philosopher, and thus make the gospel subservient to our own purposes. At this portentous moment there are many, who degrade the pulpit into the vehicle of prejudiced opinion. Surely, if we must at all advert to the passing scene of politics, we may thence deduce no unprofitable reflections. A good heart
might

might easily, from such a view, suggest the topics of exhortation. But to hold forth the picture of national prosperity that a pacific administration might have once secured, in opposition, to the gloomy prospect of a ruined kingdom; to declaim on the blessings of peace as contrasted with the miseries of war; instead of attempting to soften, by every alleviating circumstance, the features of calamity, or intreating our flock, to bear with patience those evils which must be—can only tend to increase the number of the disaffected—to swell the murmurs of the multitude. And I much fear (to use the words of the apostle) that the merit of such a declaimer, hath “been corrupted from the simplicity which is in *Christ*.”

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But I have done—"It is sufficient to have thus admonished;" and, though I have not treated of gross enormities, to have pointed out omissions, indecorums, and improprieties that "the man of God may be perfect; thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Be it ours therefore to guard, with equal caution, against the temptations of interest and pleasure, in our general conversation with the world, to pay especial attention to the flock committed to our care; to preserve, amidst our immediate connections, the religious sense, in all its ardor; and to communicate, to all around us, in the house of God, that unaffected piety and zeal, which enliven devotion, and animate exhortation. So shall

shall "we behave in all things," as becomes "the disciples of the Lord Jesus;" "rejoicing in the testimony of our conscience," that we have practised, as we have preached, "in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom."

F I N I S.

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